

Message Text

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SUBJ: CAMPUS UNREST OVER PROPOSED UNIVERSITY REFORMS

/SUMMARY/: THE RESURGENCE OF CAMPUS UNREST THROUGHOUT ITALY'S UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, ACCOMPANIED BY SPORADIC BUT DISTRESSING ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND THE OCCUPATION OF MANY FACULTIES NATIONWIDE, HAS LED THE MEDIA TO PROCLAIM A "RETURN TO '68" IN REFERENCE TO THAT PRIOR PERIOD OF STUDENT PROTEST. THE /CAUSUS BELLI/ THIS TIME IS A REFORM PLAN ADVANCED BY MINISTER OF EDUCATION MALFATTI, PARTICULARLY THE PROVISION RELATED TO EXAM REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATIONS. MOST SERIOUS OBSERVERS, HOWEVER, SEE BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THIS PROTEST THE BOILING OVER OF LONG-SIMMERING UNIVERSITY AND EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS FACING ITALIAN YOUTH TODAY. THE GOVERNMENT AND UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE HAS BEEN A FLURRY OF MEETINGS TO DISCUSS EDUCATIONAL REFORM /END SUMMARY/.

1. /MALFATTI REFORM/: THE PROVISION WHICH HAS MOST DISTURBED STUDENTS, AND MANY UNIVERSITY LECTURERS, WOULD LIMIT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO BE EXAMINED MORE THAN ONCE ON THE SAME MATERIAL. FOLLOWING THE 1968 CAMPUS CRISIS STUDENTS WERE ALLOWED TO DEVELOP INDIVIDUAL STUDY PLANS, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THEIR FACULTY ADVISERS, AND THUS TO CHOOSE THE SUBJECTS ON

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WHICH THEY WOULD BE TESTED. THE PRACTICE DEVELOPED IN WHICH A STUDENT MAY BE EXAMINED IN TWO OR MORE CONSECUTIVE YEARS OVER SIMILAR MATERIAL, SUPPOSEDLY TO ENCOURAGE THE STUDENT TO DEEPEN HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIELD, BECAUSE THE MATERIAL IS ANALYZED FROM ANOTHER VIEWPOINT. THE MALFATTI PROPOSAL ATTEMPTED TO RESTRICT IN LEGAL TERMS THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THIS "DOUBLE EXAMINATION" IN ORDER TO DISCOURAGE ABUSE OF THE

POSSIBILITY BY STUDENTS TRYING TO AVOID COURSE WORK. INITIALLY STUDENTS PROTESTED BECAUSE THE Malfatti REFORM WAS TO GO INTO EFFECT IMMEDIATELY AND APPEARED TO BE RETROACTIVE, THAT IS, AFFECT STUDENTS NOW IN UNIVERSITY WHO HAD ALREADY FULFILLED CURRICULA REQUIREMENTS BY MEANS OF THE DOUBLE EXAMINATION. BEYOND THIS, THERE WAS A PSYCHOLOGICAL RESISTANCE TO GIVING UP THE LIBERALIZATION OF STUDY PLANS WHICH HAD BEEN ONE OF THE FOREMOST STUDENT VICTORIES FROM 1968. AT THE SUGGESTION OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE Malfatti REFORM HAS BEEN POSTPONED INDEFINITELY.

2. ANOTHER PROVISION OF THE REFORM WHICH HAS BEEN STRONGLY ATTACKED IS THE CREATION OF THREE LEVELS OF UNIVERSITY DEGREES TO REPLACE THE ONLY DEGREE NOW GRANTED, THE /LAUREA/ (ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO A MASTERS DEGREE). THE OBJECTION IS THAT THE NEW DEGREE SYSTEM WOULD COVERTLY INTRODUCE A LIMITATION OF NUMBERS ON THE STUDENT BODY, WHEREAS THERE ARE PRACTICALLY OPEN ADMISSIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY AT THIS TIME.

3. THE PROTEST OVER THE Malfatti REFORM HAS TAKEN PLACE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF TWO LARGER ISSUES IN WHICH ITALIAN YOUTH FEEL THEMSELVES ENTRAPPED. FIRST IS THE CRYING NEED FOR COMPLETE STRUCTURAL REFORM OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM. AMONG OTHER CAUSES, STUDENTS ARE AGITATING FOR THE ABOLISHMENT OF DEPARTMENTS AND THE CHAIRMANSHIPS FROM WHICH SENIOR PROFESSORS EXERCISE INORDINATE POWER OVER THE STUDIES AND FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OF THEIR STUDENTS, AS WELL AS UNIVERSITY POLITICS IN GENERAL. THE UNIVERSITIES THEMSELVES ARE TERRIBLY OVERCROWDED AND UNDERFINANCED. THE SECOND ISSUE IS THE MASSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT

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OF YOUNG PEOPLE BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE UNIVERSITY. THE TWO ISSUES CONVERGE IN THE LAMENT THAT THE /LAUREA/ IS NOW WORTHLESS, THAT THE UNIVERSITY DOES NOT PREPARE A STUDENT FOR A PROFESSION, AND EVEN THEN, THERE IS NO JOB AWAITING HIM WHEN HE GRADUATES. THE EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM OF THE UNIVERSITY, A TRADITIONAL EMPLOYER OF ITS GRADUATES, IS IN SHAMBLES, WITH MANY LECTURERS/ASSISTANT PROFESSOR UNDERPAID AND HAVING ONLY TENUOUS LEGAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE UNIVERSITY TO BEGIN WITH.

4. ONE CURIOUS NEW FEATURE IN THE 1977 PROTEST IS A SORT OF FRAGMENTATION OF THE LEFT, AT LEAST WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY. THE LEADERS OF THE PROTEST INITIALLY WERE THE "AUTONOMOUS COLLECTIVES", NONALIGNED LEFTIST GROUPS, WHO FAVORED THE COMPLETE CESSATION OF CLASSES AND UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES UNTIL REFORM HAS BEEN PUT INTO MOTION. THEY HAVE CRITICIZED THE COMMUNIST PARTY FOR SUPPORTING THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT, WHICH THEY SEE AS TACITLY SUPPORTING THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WHICH PRODUCED THE PLAN TO DENY STUDENTS THEIR RIGHTS. THE COMMUNISTS AND OTHER LONG-ESTABLISHED LEFTIST GROUPS (LOTTA CONTINUA,

AVANGUARDIA-OPERAIA, ETC.) PREFER "OPEN OCCUPATION" OF THE FACULTIES, UNDER WHICH CLASSES ARE CONTINUED AMIDST THE PROTEST. VARIOUS CATHOLIC GROUPS OF THE LEFT HAVE ALSO ADHERED TO THIS LATTER LINE.

5. THE OFFICIAL RESPONSE HAS BEEN A FLURRY OF MEETINGS. EARLIER IN THE WEEK ANDREOTTI MET WITH THE RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME, WHERE PROBLEMS ARE PARTICULARLY GRAVE. THE RECTOR HAS ALSO CONFERRED WITH UNION LEADERS, AS WILL Malfatti TONIGHT. THE OUTCOME OF THESE MEETINGS MAY VERY WELL BE A COMPLETE SETTING ASIDE OF THE Malfatti REFORM, BUT BEYOND THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT ANY INNOVATIVE AND CONCRETE ALTERNATIVE PLAN WILL EMERGE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.BEAUDRY

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